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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK UDALL, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Father of all, we praise and glorify Your Holy Name. You are the fountain of life, the source of all goodness, and the center of our joy.

Today, fill our lawmakers with Your blessings. Bless them with the courage to follow You as they maintain confidence in the power of Your providence. Bless their labors that they will live to see a harvest of justice and peace in our Nation and world. Bless their family members with health and safety, for You are our refuge and strength. Bless us all, that one day we may dwell in Your house forever.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK UDALL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 28, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK UDALL, a Sen-

ator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business for up to 2 hours, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The majority will control the first hour, the Republicans will control the second hour. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to the motion to proceed to H.R. 3548.

I would direct a question to the Chair. What time does the 30 hours postcloture run out?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time expires at 12:26 a.m. Thursday.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I hope we can work something out with the Republicans. We are going to have that vote as soon as we can. I am sorry that we might have to do it in the morning. I think we should be able to avoid that. The vote was held later than I wanted it because a Senator was quite ill. I hope we can work something out. We have bipartisan support, and that is just not words.

We have significant numbers of Republicans and Democrats who want to do two things—one, to do something about the first-time home buyers tax credit. There has been general agreement by a significant number of Senators, Democrats and Republicans, to get this done. The legislation is before

this body now. We also have the loss carryback, which is extremely important for businesses at this time, also widely agreed upon. It was originally sponsored by Senator BUNNING, and now Senator BAUCUS and others have agreed to this—not two or three Senators but significant numbers on both sides. We could get those done. We have given the Republicans a request to do it in 2 hours, and Senators said they don't even need that much time to get this done.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, would the majority leader yield?

Mr. REID. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. McCONNELL. I would just say to my friend, we have a lot of fights around here over things we disagree on, but on this particular measure, this is an unnecessary impasse that we have. We have come very close to a very modest number of amendments. My side would be more than happy to accept time agreements on all of the amendments. I want to second what the majority leader says, that I hope we can indeed work out an agreement for a modest number of amendments with time agreements and wrap up this bill because I certainly share his view that most Members support the underlying measure and the additions to which the majority leader has referred.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, first of all, the other amendments are vexatious. They are argumentative. They are not germane. They are not relevant to this legislation. But it seems that this year, every time we get where we try to get something done, we have had stalling. We had a Senator out here yesterday who had done the work to find out how many times we have been stopped from doing things. Almost 60 times on absolute filibusters we have had to invoke cloture and 30-some-odd times on just objecting to legislation going forward.

The other amendments the Republican leader has suggested are amendments that are not related to this legislation, and there is wide disagreement from Republicans and Democrats.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Why do we need to do that? We don't need to. It is only an effort to slow things down. We are not going to agree to that. It is not necessary.

Let's get these things done. We will move to something as quickly as we get rid of this, and they can move the nongermane, nonrelevant amendments on those, but let's get this done. I don't know when we can do this legislation for the first-time home buyers. It has been a tremendous boon to real estate all over America today. Has it been a perfect program? Of course not. But the good part of the amendments—two amendments we are talking about—is they are fully paid for. It doesn't run up the national debt by 10 cents—by nothing. Let's get this done and then move on and start arguing about other things. There is nothing to argue about here. We are not going to go to those amendments.

I had a caucus yesterday in which the Presiding Officer and a number of other Senators throughout the Chamber were there. We have done this time after time, and quite frankly we are tired of it. It is not necessary. There is no reason to have these amendments that are just rifleshoots at trying to embarrass people, and these two amendments don't embarrass anyone. They are good for the country. I hope we can get them done.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

GETTING OUR WORK DONE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, my good friend the majority leader used to say frequently when he was in the minority that the price of being in the majority in the Senate is you have to take votes in order to advance bills in a smooth process.

My understanding is that we were within one amendment of reaching an agreement several days ago. I think we are not that far away from an agreement that would allow us to expedite consideration of the bill, move it along, and be fair to the minority. I think everyone knows it is not uncommon in the Senate—in fact, it is routine—for there to be amendments offered by both sides that are not directly related to the bill. So there is nothing extraordinary about this.

Let me repeat, we would be more than happy to enter into a short time agreement on the amendments we were discussing with the majority and try to wrap up this bill at the earliest possible time, certainly earlier than we would wrap it up if we let all of this time run until after midnight tonight.

HEALTH CARE WEEK XV, DAY III

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, after months of hearing that Ameri-

cans don't want government-run health care, Democratic leaders in Washington have made their decision: They are going to include it in their health care bill whether Americans want it or not.

Supporters of the government-run plan say they are only advocating one more option among many. What they don't say is that the option they are advocating would soon be the only option. The others would simply fade away.

It is not that hard to understand. Private health plans would fade away because a government-run plan would use the deep pockets of the Federal Government to set artificially low prices or absorb a loss, making it impossible for private plans to compete. Private plans would either become so expensive that only the very wealthy could afford them or they would go out of business altogether.

If you want to know what happens after that, just ask somebody who lives in a country that has already gone down the road of government-run health care for all. What we have seen in those countries is what we would see here: rationing, denials, and delay. In the United Kingdom, for example, a government board sets guidelines on who gets to use certain drugs and treatments. This means that even if a treatment is effective, it can be withheld from patients because of the amount of money it costs the government. This is what happens when government gets involved in the health care business.

A government plan won't come cheap either. We don't know all the details that Democratic leaders put into their bill behind closed doors, but we do know it will cost over \$1 trillion in the middle of a terrible recession. It will cost \$1 trillion at a time of near 10 percent unemployment; \$1 trillion just a few weeks after the Treasury Department said the administration ran up the largest annual deficit in U.S. history; \$1 trillion at a moment when the U.S. Government is financing 9 out of 10 new mortgages and already owns most major U.S. automakers, along with large parts of the finance and insurance industries. It will cost \$1 trillion at a time when government spending accounts for a bigger share of the national economy than at any time since the Second World War. It will cost \$1 trillion when Congress is about to make a public admission that it can't handle its own finances by raising the debt ceiling.

Now is not the time for a \$1 trillion experiment in government health care. Now is the time to buckle down financially and to find commonsense reforms in the area of health care that actually save people money by driving down costs.

Americans asked for lower costs, and they didn't get it. What they got instead was more government, more spending, more debt. This is why so many Americans feel as though they

have been taken for a ride in this debate, and it is also why a lot of our friends on the other side are concerned about the bill that is headed to the Senate floor. Americans have issued their verdict. They have been clear. They have said that enough is enough—no government plan, no more debt, no more government takeovers.

Democratic leaders may continue to insist on a bill that most Americans oppose, but it is the wrong approach. A government-owned, government-operated insurance plan was a bad idea before, and it is a bad idea now.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 2 hours, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the second half.

The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, for the next hour, I will be joined on this floor by my freshman colleagues as we talk with the American people about the importance of health reform. We are committed to ending the status quo. We have had enough of constituents being denied coverage because of existing conditions. We are tired of skyrocketing health insurance premiums hurting small business. We have had it up to here with the lack of choices and affordability in our States. So today my colleagues and I will be talking about why health reform will work and how it is working already.

There are many pilot programs, State initiatives, and private programs showing results right now. There are other very good ideas pending in the health reform bills. Our general theme this morning is innovation that works.

First, we will hear from the Senator from New Mexico, TOM UDALL, who will discuss how we must address the very real health care challenges facing rural Americans. Senator UDALL will share with us rural health innovation that works.

I yield time to Senator UDALL.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I seek recognition.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, let me thank the Senator